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#### FIRST DESCRIPTION OF THE NEST OF THE SLENDER-BILLED FINCH

The Slender-billed Finch *Xenospingus concolor* is a poorly known bird that inhabits some coastal valleys from central Peru to northern Chile (Koepcke 1970, Ridgely & Tudor 1989). It is shy and inconspicuous, occurring in natural riparian shrubbery, and its nest has not been described (Collar *et al.* 1992). Here I present observations on two nests in southwestern Peru.

On 18 December 1995, I found an individual building a nest in the riparian thickets of La Real (16°07'S, 72°29'W), in the Majes valley at an elevation of 550 m. Slender-billed Finches occur in the riparian thickets (mainly of *Tessaria integrifolia* and *Baccharis* sp.) all along this valley (González & Málaga 1997). The site of the nest was about 50 m from the river, and on the other side about the same distance from extensive rice plantations. A pair of birds was present in the vicinity of the site but only one bird, presumably the female, was nest-building. During three hours of observations, it twice brought twigs to the nest, and twice went to the nest without material, apparently to shape the interior. The nest was placed among ramificating dead branches of *Tessaria* with a tangle of many dead stems and leaves of *Baccharis*. It was about 80% complete, 2 m above ground and well hidden; globular in shape, about 11 cm in diameter, and entirely woven of fine twigs.

The second nest was found on 2 June 1996, in riparian shrubbery between Ocucaje and Callango (14°27'S, 75°38'W), in the Ica valley at an elevation of 300 m. It was first located by students taking part in a field course on regional wildlife, and shown to me. The riparian shrubbery of Ocucaje is drier than that of the Majes valley, and interspersed with *Baccharis* (fruiting at that time), "Huarango" trees (*Acacia macracantha*; with fruit in pods) and introduced shrubs of *Tamarix*. The nest was empty and apparently recently built, as a pair of Slender-billed Finches were calling persistently around it, uttering high-pitched cheeping calls which at first led us to suppose that there were nestlings in the nest. This nest was woven with dry leaves of "caña brava" (*Gynerium sagittatum*, a large grass) and was oval-shaped, with the entrance high up on one side; height 12–13 cm, depth 8 cm, width of nest walls 2.2 cm, entrance diameter 4 cm. It was 1.5 m above ground, in a tangle of

small twigs between the branches of a small *Acacia*, with an impenetrable tangle of "caña brava" behind. It was collected and is now in the collection of the Departamento de Ornitología, Museo de Historia Natural of the Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos, Lima.

This discovery was one of the objectives in a research project on the ecology of the Slender-billed Finch, sponsored by the American Bird Conservancy. I wish to thank Biol. Victor Velásquez for inviting me to Ocucaje and the students that helped me to discover the nest: Emilio Ayquipa, Jessica Caballero, Erika Carnero, Jorge Espinoza, Alipio Baldeón, all from the Facultad de Ciencias Biológicas y Químicas of the Universidad Nacional de Ica. Irma Franke (Museo de Historia Natural, UNMSM, Lima) and Manuel Plenge helped with the MS.

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20 December 1996

A SPECIMEN OF *HIRUNDO ABYSSINICA* FROM MADAGASCAR

In the course of a revision of the bird collection in the Museum of Natural History of Geneva, Switzerland, I came across a specimen of *Hirundo abyssinica* which appears to be the first record for Madagascar. The specimen (MHNG 835.83) was purchased in September 1925 from a certain Mr Chauvin, along with six other Malagasy species. The shipment was dispatched in part from the Académie Malgache. The specimen was collected in January 1925 near Lake Alaotra, northeast of Antananarivo. In eastern Africa, the species breeds from Ethiopia to the Cape and is partly migratory, so its occurrence in Madagascar as an occasional, if not regular, visitor is not surprising. Dr François Baud, Curator, kindly provided further details on the origin of the specimen.

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FIRST RECORD OF SWAINSON'S HAWK *BUTEO SWAINSONI* FOR THE WEST INDIES

On the afternoon of 22 April 1996, c. 3 km south of Monte Christi, in the northwest Dominican Republic, the authors were driving through

an area of dry scrub when a medium-sized Buteo was noticed soaring near the road. We stopped and watched the bird for approximately five minutes at ranges down to *c.* 100 metres before it flew west and out of sight. We identified it as a Swainson's Hawk *Buteo swainsoni*, a species both GMK and CGB had seen previously in the U.S.A. and Canada.

The bird was identified as a light morph adult and the following details were recorded. Approximately the same size as Red-tailed Hawk *Buteo jamaicensis*, but with marginally longer, more pointed wings and narrower hand than that species. The head was dark brown with whitish throat that contrasted with the dark brown upper breast. The lower breast, belly and ventral area were white. The tail was dark. The underwings had whitish underwing coverts contrasting with darker remiges recalling Booted Eagle *Hieraaetus pennatus*, although the remiges were not as uniformly dark as that species. The upperparts appeared uniformly dark brown.

This is the first documented sighting of Swainson's Hawk in the Dominican Republic. Stockton de Dod (1981) and Wetmore & Swales (1931) list no records for the island of Hispaniola and there are no records from elsewhere in the West Indies. The species breeds in prairie and open areas of western North America from southern Canada south to Texas and central California. It migrates south to winter in South America and thus its appearance in the West Indies is not unexpected.

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NOTES ON THE BLACK-BACKED TANAGER *TANGARA PERUVIANA*  
 (DESMAREST, 1806)

*Tangara peruviana* has a limited range in southeast Brazil, from Espirito Santo to Rio Grande do Sul (Meyer de Schauensee 1970, Argel de Oliveira *et al.* 1993). It has been considered conspecific with, and a colour morph of, the more widespread *T. preciosa* (Sick 1988), but is now recognised, though somewhat tentatively, as a separate